

July 18, 2003

George Chartier  
USDA-AMS Fruit and Vegetable Programs  
Marketing Order Administration Branch  
USDA Mail Stop 0237  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250-0201  
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Dear George Chartier:

The Oregon Hop Growers Association (OHGA) has learned that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is preparing to announce an August 15, 2003 hearing date to begin collecting testimony regarding a proposed federal hop marketing order for hops grown in the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and California. On Thursday, July 17 the OHGA met for the purpose of gaining feedback from Oregon hop growers regarding the suitability of the anticipated hearing date. The result of the meeting was a vote which directed the OHGA to request that USDA consider a post-harvest hearing date.

We are extremely concerned about the anticipated hearing date because it is in direct conflict with Oregon hop harvest. Oregon has approximately 33 hop growers, many of which begin harvest in August, and depending on the particular year, some even begin picking hops before August 15. It should also be explained that preparing for harvest is a time consuming event that begin weeks before the first hop is even picked (repairing picking machine, preparing field equipment, etc.). Well over half the hop acreage grown in Oregon is of aroma-type hop varieties which are considered "early varieties" for harvest purposes. This is very different from the other hop growing

EX 51

areas in the U.S. where the majority of the hops grown are alpha-type varieties that are considered "late" in the harvest schedule.

Oregon hop growers produce 16% of the U.S. hop crop and they are an important part of the industry. If the August 15 hearing date is realized, USDA is essentially excluding the participation of one segment of the industry. On August 15 the attention of Oregon hop growers will not be on the hearing for the proposed federal hop marketing order, but instead on harvesting their crop. We believe that to ensure the full and undivided participation of all U.S. hop growers, the hearing date should be scheduled after the 2003 harvest is complete.

Therefore, we request USDA to schedule the hearing October 1, 2003 or after.

The request to schedule the hearing post-harvest is in no way a statement in favor or against the marketing order in general. An August 15 hearing date will prevent participation from growers of all positions – in favor, opposed, and undecided. The later hearing date simply allows for all Oregon hop growers to participate in the hearing process to the fullest extent possible.

We appreciate your consideration of this important request. Please contact me or the OHGA office for additional information.

Sincerely,

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